

Recommendations for 2003-2005

1. Define a basic level of information technology capacity for all health departments.

To function as an effective system, every local jurisdiction and the state must have basic, compatible technology and the skills to use it. This should include capacity for computer-based surveillance, geographic mapping, and skills to post health alerts on line and analyze data.

2. Assure that the public health workforce has the ability to participate in computer-based training and emergency communication drills.

Our ability to use technology well—at the moment it is needed—will rest on our level of preparation. Public health officials must be able to use a range of tools, including video, audio, and computer-based technology. Training and testing equipment is an essential part of assuring that we are ready to respond effectively in an emergency.

3. Implement standard data security procedures, install software and equipment, and share protocols for data management and data access system-wide.

With the rapid increase in the use of electronic methods to collect, transmit, and store information, data security is increasingly important. Coordinating efforts in this area will promote efficiency and set firm standards for assuring confidentiality and data quality.

4. Develop data standards.

The quality of information available to public health officials depends on everyone using the same names and definitions for thousands of words and ideas. Achieving this consistency is a complex task and requires sustained attention and evaluation.

5. Continue information technology coordination throughout the public health system, with a focus on investments, connectivity, and development of on-line information technology assessments.

The technology resources used to support public health efforts need to be maintained statewide, updated regularly, and evaluated on a continuous basis. By coordinating efforts, agencies can save money, assure continuous communication capacity, document gaps, and identify ways to share resources.